

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Marine Resources Division

Summary of Laws for Commercial Shad Fishing with Legal References
2007 – 2008

This document should be kept on board all vessels employed for commercial shad fishing as a reference to regulation, not to supersede knowledge of the pertinent laws.

License and Permit Requirements [Section 50-5-300, Section 50-5-310, Section 50-5-325, and Section 50-5-1500]

Residents:	Commercial License	\$ 25.00
	Shad gill net license	\$ 10.00 per 100 yards or fraction
	Commercial Vessel Decal	no charge
	Shad gill net permit	no charge
Non Residents:	Commercial License	\$300.00
	Shad gill net license	\$ 50.00 per 100 yards or fraction
	Commercial Vessel Decal	no charge
	Shad gill net permit	no charge

Legal definitions important to shad fishermen include:

“Anadromous” identifies fish which undertake adult migration from brackish or salt waters into freshwaters to spawn, except striped bass or rock fish and hybrid bass, and includes landlocked stocks of those fish.

“Cast net” means nonbaited circular webbing having a weighted peripheral line which is thrown by hand and retrieved by a central line connected to radiating tuck lines attached to the peripheral line.

“Catadromous” identifies fish which undertake adult migration from freshwater into brackish or salt water to spawn.

“Commercial equipment” means:

(a) any trawl, haul seine, gill net, channel net, bull rake, seed fork, grabs, escalator, or dredge; and

(b) any net, seine, trap, pot, tongs, rake, fork, trotline, or other device or appliance when used for taking or attempting to take fish for a commercial purpose.

“Commercial purpose” means:

(a) being engaged in buying or selling fish;

(b) taking or attempting to take fish in order to derive income or other consideration;

(c) using commercial equipment; and

(d) otherwise being engaged in the fisheries industry with the intent to derive income.

“Fish” means finfish, shellfish including mollusks, crustaceans, horseshoe crabs, whelks (conchs), turtles, and terrapin or products thereof.

“Gill net” means a net which is designed to hang vertically and capture fish by entanglement usually of the head, gill covers, or preopercles, and does not include gill net for taking shad unless specified.

“Herring” means any or all life stages of the river herrings being blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*) and alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*).

“Recreational fishermen” means persons taking or attempting to take saltwater fish for recreation only, and not for commercial purposes.

“Salt waters” means all waters of the rivers and their tributaries, streams, and estuaries lying seaward of the dividing line between salt water and freshwater and all impounded waters seaward of the dividing line between salt water and freshwater which are intermittently filled or drained by the action of the tide.

“Saltwater gamefish” means any species of saltwater fish designated as a saltwater gamefish in this title.

“Shad” means American or white shad (*Alosa sapidissima*) and hickory or skip-jack shad (*Alosa mediocris*).

“Striker” means a person, other than a licensed saltwater commercial fisherman, who under immediate supervision assists a licensed commercial saltwater fisherman, but does not use separate commercial equipment on a vessel which is engaged in commercial fishing.

“Take” means to harass intentionally, hunt, capture, gather, harvest, remove, catch, wound, or kill or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, gather, harvest, remove, catch, wound, or kill.

“Territorial sea” means that portion of the Atlantic Ocean under the jurisdiction of the State of South Carolina as depicted on charts of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its successor agency.

“Skim-bow net” means a net constructed of webbing not greater than two and one-half inches, stretched mesh, hung within a frame formed by a length of wood or other material looped and attached upon itself end to end forming a loop having no distance across greater than fifteen feet.

“Stretch” as used to describe the measure of mesh of nets means that the material is pulled snugly but not to the point of lengthening the single or multi-strand line of the netting. Measurement is made across the widest dimension of the mesh when so pulled. [Section 50-5-15]

Commercial Shad Seasons and Controls

General: Methods and equipment: Any lawful method and equipment unless noted by area
Size and take limits: No limits unless noted by area

Winyah Bay- includes Black River, Sampit River, Great Pee Dee, Little Pee Dee, Lynches River, Waccamaw River, and Winyah Bay:

Pee Dee above US Hwy 701, Waccamaw River above entrance of Big Bull Creek, and Black River above county Road 179:

Season: February 1 – April 30
Times: Monday Noon – Saturday Noon

Remainder of Winyah Bay, including Sampit River & Big Bull Creek:

Season: February 1 – April 15
Times: Monday Noon – Saturday Noon, local time
Methods: No restrictions, except drift nets in Waccamaw River between Butler Island and US17 restricted to 900 feet.

Santee River- includes below Wilson Dam including the Rediversion Canal below St. Stephen Dam, North Santee River, North Santee Bay, and South Santee River:

Rediversion Canal from St. Stephen Dam seaward to the seaward terminus of the northern dike of the Rediversion Canal - no open season

Rediversion Canal from the seaward terminus of the northern dike of the Rediversion Canal seaward to Santee River:

Season: February 1 – April 30
Times: 7am – 7pm, Tuesday and Thursday

Wilson Dam to US Hwy 52 - no open season

US Hwy 52 to SC Hwy 41:

Season: February 1 – April 30
Times: 7am – 7pm, Tuesday and Thursday

SC Hwy 41 seaward:

Season: February 1 – March 31
Times: Monday Noon – Saturday Noon

Charleston Harbor – includes Wando River and Cooper River to US Hwy 17 bridges, Charleston Harbor, and Ashley River.

Tailrace Canal from Wadboo Creek to Jeffries Power Plant: no open season

Cooper River from Wadboo Creek to US Hwy 17: no open season

Ashley River to confluence with Popper Dam Creek

Season: February 1 – March 31
Times: Wednesday Noon – Saturday Noon

Remainder of Charleston Harbor System (includes Wando River):

Season: February 1 – March 31
Times: Wednesday Noon – Saturday Noon
Methods: Drift nets only

Edisto River – includes Edisto River Estuary, Edisto River, North and South Branches (Forks) of the Edisto River.

Above US Hwy 15 bridge:

Season: January 15 – April 15
Times: Tuesday Noon – Saturday Noon
Methods: Any law method and equipment, however nets must have a mesh size no smaller than five inches and no larger than five and one-half inches.

Seaward of US Hwy 15 bridge and above US Hwy 17 bridge:

Season: January 15 – April 15
Times: Tuesday Noon – Saturday Noon

Below US Hwy 17 bridge:

Season: January 1 – March 31
Times: Wednesday Noon – Friday Midnight

Ashepoo River –

Season: February 1 – March 31
Times: Friday Noon – Saturday Noon

Combahee River –

All tributaries except main stems of Salkehatchie Rivers: no open season.

Remainder of Combahee River, including main stems of Salkehatchie Rivers:

Season: January 15 – March 31
Times: Anchored nets: Tuesday Noon – Friday Noon
Drift nets: Monday Noon – Saturday Noon

Coosawhatchie River – no open season

Savannah River – South Carolina portions

New Savannah Bluff Lock & Dam to confluence with Spirit Creek: no open season.

Main River above I95 Bridge:

Season: January 1 – April 15
Times: Wednesday 7am – Saturday 7pm

Tributaries above I95 bridge – no open season

Seaward of I95 Bridge:

Season: January 1 – March 31 except no anchored nets allowed in Savannah's Little Back River, Back River, and the north channel of Savannah River downstream from New Savannah Cut.
Times: Tuesday 7am – Friday 7 pm

Atlantic Ocean - no open season

Lake Moultrie, Lake Marion, Diversion Canal, & Intake Canal of Rediversion Canal:

Season: No closed season
Times: No restrictions
Methods: Cast nets and lift nets only
Take limits: 250 pounds of herring and shad combined per boat per day

Article 15, Chapter 5, Title 50 governs shad fisheries in freshwaters and salt waters. [Section 50-5-1500 (A)]

The Department may restrict the number of nets for taking shad in any body of water where the numbers of nets or fishermen must be limited due to statutory limitations on placement of nets, to prevent congestion of nets or watercraft, or for conservation purposes. The Department may grant permits to licensed commercial saltwater fishermen for this purpose. Permits may be limited in number and may be

conditioned so as to designate areas, size and take limits, hours, type and amount of equipment, and catch reporting requirements. [Section 50-5-1500 (B)]

A person taking or attempting to take shad with commercial equipment must obtain a commercial saltwater fishing license and commercial equipment license and any related permits. [Section 50-5-1500 (C)]

It is unlawful to take or attempt to take shad with commercial equipment without obtaining the required fishing licenses or permits. [Section 50-5-1500 (D)]

It is unlawful to take shad by hook and line or by skim-bow net while operating or possessing any commercial fishing equipment for taking shad or herring. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (1)]

It is unlawful for a recreational fisherman to take shad with any other fishing equipment except cast nets, skim-bow nets, and hook and line which includes rod and reel, provided that a properly licensed gill net may be used to take shad for recreational purposes. Except from sanctuaries designated by the Department, a recreational fisherman may take shad:

[a] by hook and line and cast net at any time of the year,

[b] by skim-bow net from February 1 – April 30; and

[c] by licensed gill net during those times provided in this article for commercial fishing.

[Section 50-5-1510 (A) (2)]

It is unlawful to possess saltwater or freshwater gamefish or fishing tackle capable of taking saltwater or freshwater gamefish while using shad gill nets. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (3)]

Nongame fish taken in lawfully fished shad nets or skim-bow nets may be kept by the fisherman. Any Atlantic sturgeon and any gamefish must be returned immediately to the water. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (4)]

It is unlawful to set a net in a fixed position in the navigation channel of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (5)]

A gill net used for taking or attempting to take shad in the inshore salt waters must have a stretched mesh size of no smaller than five and one-half inches and a length not exceeding nine hundred feet. Gill nets for taking shad in the inshore salt waters may be drift fished or set in accordance with this chapter. Only one shad gill net may be drift fished by occupants of a boat, and it must be attended at all times when deployed. Additional boats in tow may not be used to increase the number of authorized nets. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (9)]

Except as otherwise provided by law or by regulation, any gill net used for shad in the freshwaters must have a stretched mesh size of no smaller than five and one-half inches and be no longer than six hundred feet. Gill nets for taking shad in the freshwaters may be freely drift fished or set. Only one shad gill net may be drift fished by occupants of a boat, and it must be attended at all times when deployed. Additional boats in tow may not be used to increase the number of authorized nets. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (10)]

A gill net used for taking or attempting to take shad in the salt waters must have at least one end buoy attached which has the name and license number of the owner clearly marked on it. A buoy not less than twenty inches in diameter must be attached to each end of the net. On any net more than three hundred feet a buoy not less than ten inches must be attached every three hundred feet on the float line. All buoys must be international orange in color and must float so as to be clearly visible at all times. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (13)]

A gill net used for taking or attempting to take shad in the freshwaters must be marked with buoys, international orange in color and not less than six inches in diameter, which float in a manner to be clearly visible at all times. One buoy must be attached to the float line of the net every three hundred feet. A buoy must be attached to each end of each net. At least one end buoy attached to the net must have the name and license number of the owner clearly marked on it. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (14)]

Skim-bow nets must be used or fished only from high land or from a pier, dock, or other structure permanently affixed to high land without the aid of any power assisted device. Only shad, herring, and other nongame fish may be retained. No such fish may be sold. [Section 50-5-1510 (A) (15)]

A person taking shad by cast net, skim-bow net, or by hook and line may possess no more than a total of ten American and hickory shad per one day except in the Santee River where the limit is twenty per day. [Section 50-5-1515 (A) (B)]

No shad taken by cast net, skim-bow net, or by hook and line may be sold, offered for sale, or purchased. In freshwaters, a person must hold a freshwater fishing license. [Section 50-5-1515 (C)]

Any sturgeon taken must be released immediately back into the waters where taken. [Section 50-5-1525 (A)]

It is unlawful for anyone to take, possess, buy, sell, or ship shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) or any part or product thereof. Any shortnose sturgeon taken incidentally to fishing activity must be returned unharmed immediately to the water from where taken. [Section 50-5-1535]

No shad net, including its cables, lines, or attached devices, either set or drift fished may be longer than one-half the normal width of the water body at the place where used, regardless of the stage of the tide, river stage, water level, or method of net deployment. [Section 50-5-1535 (A)]

[1] No net may be set within six hundred feet of any gill net previously set.

[2] No net may be drifted within six hundred feet of another drifting net.

[3] No net may be placed or set within seventy-five feet of the confluence of any tributary.

[Section 50-5-1535 (B)]

A lawfully drifted gill net may pass within six hundred feet of a lawfully anchored gill net. [Section 50-5-1535 (C)]

During times and periods when taking of shad by net is not allowed, any net which could be used for taking shad must be removed from the waters. [Section 50-5-1545 (A)]

Any non-mesh, net-related fishing apparatus, including leads, cables, anchors, signs, and buoys must be removed from the waters and banks of the streams or water courses no later than three days after the close of the shad season. Any net or part thereof found in violation is contraband and must be seized and disposed of as provided by law. [Section 50-5-1545 (D)]

Anchors with attached line and buoys may remain in lawful waters during weekly closed periods of the open season. [Section 50-5-1545 (E)]

Any net or seine set in the waters of this State which contains decomposed fish is contraband and must be seized and disposed of as provided in this chapter. [Section 50-5-1550]